Lord Charles Cornwallis, Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in the Carolinas, with his army, invaded Wilmington in 1781. While here, Cornwallis used as his headquarters the comfortable colonial residence at the southwest corner of Third and Market Streets. The basement of the building was used as a dungeon, in which certain citizens, who were held guilty of infraction of military laws, were imprisoned by the British forces, as well as soldiers, who were found guilty of infraction of military rules and discipline. The residence is in a perfect state of preservation today and is one of the outstanding points of historic interest in the Wilmington area.

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